

finding of infection in domestic rodents in Denver as recently as 1968. Recently, sick domestic cats and other carnivores have been implicated in human cases. (Unfortunately, sylvatic plague in the wild animal reservoir appears almost impossible to eradicate at present.) Finally, effective laboratory techniques are now available, especially in Public Health Department laboratories, to assist in confirmation of the diagnosis. Again, however, a high index of clinical suspicion, consideration of epidemiological factors and prompt initiation of therapy are essential for a favorable outcome.

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## Lessons from the Nork (Gonzales) Case

IN A SPECIAL ARTICLE elsewhere in this issue Judge B. Abbott Goldberg recounts with clarity the evolution in medicine, and in the law, of the responsibility and duty of hospitals and medical staffs to regulate the quality of patient care. He

briefly reviews the past and his own direct experience with the present, gives a glimpse into what may be in store for the future and then politely hints that the law will likely follow medicine if medicine will show the way.

Both the law and medicine can support the premise that the regulation or assurance of quality in patient care is for the safety and benefit of patients. But as patient care has at once become more effective and also more dangerous, neither the law nor medicine has yet developed adequate mechanisms to detect and eradicate incompetence and do this promptly and with fairness. At present there are many difficulties. Each profession approaches the problem from a different frame of reference; one seeking to punish or eliminate incompetence and the other to enhance excellence; one seeking to regulate and the other to assure; and one refers to the recent, well-publicized case as Gonzales and the other as Nork. And because of differences in approach the two systems tend to address the problems of quality in patient care more often as adversaries than as collaborators in the patient and public interest.

The problems of regulating or assuring quality in patient care are real, as are the difficulties. At present, rather than working together, medicine and the law approach the problems differently and sometimes even thwart one another. If medicine is to take the lead, as Judge Goldberg hints it should, it will be necessary to lessen some of the restrictions which now so effectively prevent medicine from policing itself, and then it will be necessary for the medical profession to attack incompetence with the same vigor it now seeks to assure excellence. Nork (Gonzales) has lessons for all.

—MSMW

## Clinical Manifestations of Hypercalcemic Disorders—A Correction

IN THE EDITORIAL "The Genesis of the Clinical Manifestations of Hypercalcemic Disorders," which appeared on page 333 of the October issue, an error was made in the typescript substituting the word calcium for bicarbonate. The first sentence of the fourth paragraph should read, "Second, it has been shown that non PTH-induced hypercalcemia may be associated with metabolic alkalosis, most probably due to enhanced renal tubular transport of bicarbonate."